UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.5/1995/NGO/1
16 March 1995

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
Thirty-fourth session
10-20 April 1995
Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

MONITORING OF INTERNATIONAL PLANS AND PROGRAMMES OF ACTION

Statement submitted by the Foundation for the Rights of the Family (PRODEFA), a non-governmental organization in consultative status (category II) with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is circulated in accordance with paragraphs 29 and 30 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968.

* * *

PRODEFA, on the occasion of the thirty-fourth session of the Commission for Social Development, wishes to refer to General Assembly resolution 47/237 of 20 September 1993, initially recommended by the Commission for Social Development during its thirty-third session, in 1993. In paragraph 20 of the resolution, the Secretary-General is requested to seek the views of States members of the Commission for Social Development on the desirability working out a declaration on the role, responsibilities and rights of families on the occasion of the International Year of the Family.

During the International Conference on Families, held on 18 and 19 October in New York, during the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General of the United Nations stated that there was now a consensus about the role of the family in human society and that in many ways, families were the primary mechanism through which the human community achieved its ends. The Secretary-General went on to say that the family was also an important actor in the areas of education, health care, the well-being of children, human rights

---

* E/CN.5/1995/1.

95-08057 (E) 230395 290395

/...

education and gender equality, and that the decisions taken in families were at the centre of such questions as population growth, economic development and environmental protection.

The Secretary-General, at the end of his address, affirmed that the challenge now was to ensure that the momentum gained in the course of the preparations for and observance of the Year was maintained and that mechanisms for future action were already in place.

From this perspective, PRODEFA, on the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, wishes to express its appreciation for the contribution of the United Nations to an important shift in attitudes towards the family and feels that, at this stage, concerted follow-up and long-term action in support of families are needed.

In the past, nothing has been of more concern to PRODEFA than a declaration on the social functions and rights of the family.

This initiative is supported now by an ample segment of the community of non-governmental organizations, as shown by the consensus reached by a working group of the Vienna NGO Family Committee on a document entitled "Guiding principles on the family" and by the work done in this field by the Canada National Committee for the International Year of the Family, based on the "Guiding principles on the family". Both Committees have confirmed their support for a declaration through the Malta Statement (Vienna NGO Family Committee, November 1993) and the Montreal Statement (Canada International Year of the Family Committee, Montreal, October 1994).

After the General Assembly's resolution 47/237 PRODEFA feels that such a declaration, though perhaps representing a long-term process, is now a real possibility.

A declaration on the family should not only clearly reiterate and support the rights of individuals who are family members but also embody, in a coherent and detailed document, the social rights of the family, as partly referred to in several United Nations instruments.

These rights are, essentially, the right of families to privacy and to respect for their inherent dignity, autonomy and independence; the right of families to receive protection and assistance from society and the State, including an adequate standard of living to meet their basic human needs and for the physical, mental, spiritual, ethical, cultural and social development of their members and as a family; and the right to reconcile professional and family life.

Families' common factors and functions are kinship, nurturing, socialization, solidarity, gender relationship and communication between generations.

In our view, there is a clear need for a declaration on the family, as part of the practical action plan announced by the Secretary-General as a follow-up to the International Year of the Family.

Of course, non-governmental organizations are fully aware of the concern of some Member States as regards the safeguarding of individual rights, and we fully agree that such individual rights take precedence over collective rights.

However, if we want to protect human rights effectively and if we want to ensure the well-being, development and adequate socialization of individuals, we must also promote the family, and thus build the smallest democracy at the heart of society, a family-friendly society.

PRODEFA, as a member of the international community of non-governmental organizations, expresses the hope that the distinguished delegates of this Commission, in accordance with the note verbale of 13 October 1993, in which the Secretary-General sought the views of members of the Commission on the matter, will now consider the desirability of working out a declaration spelling out the functions, rights and responsibilities of the family and will decide on the most effective procedures to follow regarding the recommendation of the General Assembly, which we suggest might be the establishment of an intra-sessional open-ended working group to consider the feasibility of such a declaration and to report accordingly to the Commission.

This, in our view, should be one of the main objectives of the follow-up to the International Year of the Family.